Anima: Jung and the Female Soul

One of the most valuable contributions Jung has made to the understanding of psychology is the discovery of the anima. Broadly speaking, Jung defined the anima as the female personality existing in the unconscious of every man.

Nevertheless, Jung made two fundamental mistakes in this description, both of which may be directly attributed to the materialist and masculist environment in which it ~~may~~ be was formulated. The first of these was to see the anima as merely the function of the mind, inferior to the rational consciousness; the second was to recognise its existence only in men.

The word chosen to denote the idea is particularly appropriate and revealing. Anima is the Latin word for soul; as is most languages, it is a feminine noun. The Romans pictured the soul as a bird and always ~~refer~~ referred to it as 'she'. The fact is that the anima is not a function of the mind. It is the soul itself.

The soul is a spiritual rather than a material entity, and as ~~such~~ is regarded by the materialists as a mere abstraction without reality. When the soul is properly considered, however, it is clear that it is more, not less real than the body and the mind. It has lived from before the beginning of time - they have not; it will live forever - they will not; it has been perfect and will

once again be perfect - they by their very nature are imperfect. The human soul, like all other spiritual creatures, is female because it is a reflection of the Divine - the Goddess. It is female because it is the very nature of spiritual things to be female*; for the feminine principle is the principle of the dominance of spirit over matter.

Jung and his followers came close to this truth regarding the anima in man as the root of spiritual aspirations and all creative expression. The transcendence of material existence is the aim and function of the soul. The crude interpretation of the anima in material (and often sexual) terms, together with the fundamental unbalance of a male-dominated society, has led to attempts to see women as embodiments of the anima. Thus the masculist may regard women as incomprehensible, uncontrollable, irrational (in the truest sense), creative (in the sense of bearing children only) and so on. And this has done great harm to many women. When the ~~man~~ woman is seen as anima, her own anima, her soul is denied, is denied: she is said to be tied to the body; her spiritual aspirations are blunted; her creative nature frustrated; her view of herself is severly circumscribed. The Jungians say that while men have anima, women have animus (a latent male personality); but as we will see; this is neither an equivalent nor an adequate substitute.

It is important to remember that in

masculist society, the male is taken as the norm - (as, for example, the word 'man' is used to refer to all humanity; the individual / citizen / child is 'he') - and this is true in psychology as in all other areas of life. Psychology as applied to women has been a secondary study, and has usually consisted of second-rate deductions and inferences from findings about male psychology. The over-emphasis in masculist society on sexual matters has led to the idea that psychic processes in men and women must be opposite and complementary. Thus ~~Jung~~ Jung has described the animus in women as complementary to the anima in men. However, as with the Oedipus complex, the anima is potentially stronger in women than in men, as they are closer to the archetypally female form of creative and spiritual energy.

The animus is not a mere figment of the Jungian imagination, ~~have~~ however, although it is not a permanent feature of human psychology. It is the personification of the masculist values thrust on women throughout their lives in a masculist culture. These male-oriented values, which are fundamentally incompatible with the woman's inner psychic nature, group themselves together into a distinct and alien bloc in the mind which may appear to be a separate personality. This is then represented in dreams and other psychic experiences by the figure of a man which may be called the animus.

Dreams of rape suffered by some women may represent the violation of her natural psychic post processes by the masculist values forced upon her.

The difficulties and imbalances caused by the undervaluing and misinterpretation of the anima affect both women and men quite radically. They are connected with the general undervaluing of the spiritual in an atmosphere increasingly dominated by a masculist philosophy. Yet the soul, which reflects the Goddess, is our most precious possession; it is the part of us which is most truly ourselves. The development of the soul towards its original perfection is the one aim of life.

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* "female" here refers to the universal female principle which operates in women and men, though generally more strongly in women, not to biological femaleness.